



PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF CARTOONS ON CHILDREN

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Aim of the Paper: Children need to be entertained and cartoons always provide a great amount of fun and entertainment to kids. Along with it, it also completes their childhood. Cartoons give children the freedom to imagination, but how much of cartoons is good for the child to view and for how many hours is it recommended is what the paper focuses on telling with regard to various factors that have psychological effect on children.



Abstract: Childhood is the most crucial phase of life. The overall development and the psychology of the child is built during that period. Children tend to imitate what they view. In this case, television is the most prevalent media influencing children. Cartoons have an impact on the child's psyche. Hence this paper analyzes the psychological issues children face while watching cartoons.

Statement of Problem: Watching cartoons forms an important activity of childhood for children, but excessive and violent graphics can be a problem for the child. Selection of the right kind of cartoons and the exposure at the right age with limited viewing is good.

Methodology : The paper is qualitative with support of theories regarding the concept of cartoons and how it affects the behaviour of the child, the paper also has insights of previously reviewed papers and the factors that throw light on this subject.

KEYWORD: Childhood , overall development , watching cartoons.

FACTORS

a. Behaviour: Overindulgence in a cartoon will have an adverse effect on the behaviour of the child. Children are quite receptive, a child's mind is like a sponge it takes in any information quickly and when it comes to cartoons, the child does not filter between the positive and the negative unlike the adult, who understands the difference between the good and the bad content, but here the child sticks onto their favourite cartoons for hours and in turn their behaviour tends to be like the one violent cartoon that they become addictive to and thus it becomes the part of their lifestyle completely, slowly when the child views the cartoon everyday they will soon imitate the same as any child's basic trait is imitation and so this will become their behaviour

b. Effect on Nutrition: Nutrition is essential for us, it is the basic need. Children should have a proper diet right from the beginning, according to the present day scenario, children consume low-nutrition, high-calorie food. Cartoons are also linked to childhood obesity, there can be various reasons for that one, when the child sees that a particular cartoon character is eating a certain type of food, then their preference too

becomes that, on the other hand, children are glued in front of their screens and also binge on their food items this results to obesity, as there is no physical activity, so when the child consumes that food, it has already lost the nutritional value this makes the child not healthy but obese. It is important to make the child understand that nutrition and eating right is part of our healthy lifestyle and also to keep the food away from the screen time is very necessary and the promotion of eating right and making exercise a part of routine will promote healthy lifestyle.

c. Violence: Children lose their sensitivity when they watch a lot of violent cartoons. Constant viewing of the violent content, a fighting scenario will make the child not care when the violent fight becomes a reality, the loss of innocence and insensitivity is a great loss for the child, One is supposed to be empathetic when one sees a violent act, but viewing violent content for a long time makes and erases the ability to do so which is again a loss of childhood as well. Children lose out on soft emotions, also the basic tendency of the child becomes to practice violence at home, school and also in social gatherings just to prove that they are like their favourite superhero and to get a slice of satisfaction that they can imitate violence anywhere, which is a negative psyche of the child and cartoons fulfil this negative trait very easily in the child's mind.

d. Effect on Academics: Some children view cartoons for long hours even before the start of school and that is a habit that every parent has to break, if this habit continues the child will not be able to focus on academics, sometimes the obsession is so high that the child will refuse to go to school, following this there laziness and lack of chronology in mind, all this is sure to effect the academic life of children, children should be encouraged to make a timetable for all the chores and cartoons or in general the television viewing should be limited to only half an hour for the child, more than that the child's body and mind will be drastically effected. In the long run, the concentration and learning ability of the child is hindered as the mind is occupied with graphics of the cartoons and the general tendency of cartoons is to keep the child entertained and the child is unable to focus on reality and studies and so this in turn effects their academics, which is a loss to the child later as most of their time is invested in watching cartoons, the interest on their educational development is nil.

e. Social and Moral Development: Psychology focuses on social and moral development of the child. A child being violent and isolated is the first negative effect of cartoons on children, continuous viewing of cartoons can make the child lose the basic attitude of mingling with people. A child should be taught the social skills which will remain with them throughout life, but also with this another important fact is that the 'thinking' of the child is channelized according to the content of the cartoon, in some of the cartoons the female characters are treated in a certain way, nowadays the cartoons show varied characters with varied dressing styles and the dialogues the characters use, so that is how the child's mind is conditioned, if the cartoon has the right content and treatment it is good for the child, but if it is negative then the development of the child is fixed to that, as children are also curious to know about how and why a certain character is moulded in such a way! So a huge chunk of social and moral development of the child depends on what type of cartoons the kid watches, so cartoons become an extension of child's behaviour and development as they form a major part of their childhood, also another very important aspect is that children are becoming demanding and jealous, as today whatever the child views want it immediately, and on the same hand the amount of jealousy that arises from seeing their superheroes or a certain kind of reel lifestyle, makes them believe it can be adapted in reality as well, whereas some of the reel can be adopted into reality but not everything that is viewed, so the child must be made to differentiate their real from reel and parents should make their child understand this.

f. Effect on language: The Gen X children are already well versed with the new slang of the modern world and with the internet it is not difficult to have knowledge of the trend that is catching up today, cartoons today have a mixture of language that again plays a major part in development of the child, language plays a vital role in the society that we live in, how we interact with others, that should be taught to children from a very young age, along with the violent content the language can be quite violent in cartoons, so young minds can add it to their everyday speech, also some cartoons may really make the child well versed in the right

language and benefit them but some can use harsh or impolite language which registers in the mind of young. Language should be positive, make sure that the child watches cartoons that enrich their vocabulary.

g. Effect of colours: A very important aspect of our visual experience is colours, a child is very much attracted by colours on screen, but colours can affect our body systems, psychologists say that different colours can have different effect on our bodies, Red has an effect on our blood pressure, the more of red we see the more we tend to increase our blood pressure, lots of colours also plays with the fragile mind of the child, it can later on effect their eye-sight. Moderation of television viewing is highly recommended, as the major aim of cartoons is colours to make the cartoon entertaining there is a burst of colours on screen that attracts and makes the child so attentive, so again here moderation is the key in order to keep the child safe and make their viewing fun and not strenuous.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Mussen. P & Rutherford. E (1961) kids who watch high-level of aggressive cartoons are more inclined to brutality and violence, the emulation and the addictive nature will be a major threat to the overall development of the child, the cartoons are a source of relaxation to the child in the age group of 3-6 years but when it becomes a habit for a prolonged period of time, then it is likely to mess up with the child's reality, as soon the child will lose the ability to focus, communicate as well as bring in a sense of detachment to the reality.

Sharmin (2015) in her research had mentioned that the fact that children are more attracted to the cartoons than the academic content because of the audio-visual effects and also that the imitation of their favourite hero comes very natural for the child because the character looks larger than life adding to these effects so the tendency is very natural and so slowly by being mesmerized by all these characters the child emulates and makes them their life, but now the academic set-up has also become audio and visual, with the advent of smart classrooms, this tradition is also being covered, but there is still the enigma of cartoons and the characters, their behaviour and lifestyle becomes the life of the child as the child fails to distinguish the real from the reel so it effects them drastically. **Diehl and Toelle (2011)** talking of academics tells that children who watch educational programmes more than cartoons perform well academically, so the solution to the problem is to make the child watch content that will nourish their thinking, the charm of cartoons will be in one hand but educational content and knowledge will help in overall development of the child.

Baran and Davis (2009) compared the viewing of cartoons and the effect of it on language, the importance of socialization is needed and cartoons hugely effect socialising skills and children learn from cartoons and view the society from that view, their language and behaviour becomes what they see in cartoons. The major concern is that the language does not have a filter sometimes and the child imbibes the language without knowing the meaning of it, so the language forms the basis on everything that we gain and give back to the society, so keeping a watch on the child's selection of cartoons according to their age is also very necessary and for that parental concern should be applicable.

When it comes to the overall development of the child, nutrition also plays a key role, there are various arguments on the topic that children actually make the right nutrition choices when they are influenced by their favourite cartoon characters and their food habits, eg. Popeye the sailor man has always shown us that spinach can be tasty and well liked by children as well, it makes you strong, this makes the cartoon have a positive impact on the child, but there are many other angles to this where the child loses on appetite due to the addiction of cartoons. **Asha (2015)** children develop wrong eating habits due to being glued to the television, a child addicted to it will lose time, become obese, become a couch-potato so it is important for the parent to manage the timing of the child.

Asha (2015) Isolation and indifference in a child is one of the most important negative trait that cartoons inculcate, the behaviour is highly unacceptable as the child will view the cartoons everyday and lose focus with the world around him, leading him to not being active, unable to mingle with his/her play group, low self-esteem and communication skills are affected, hence a lot of cartoons or television also in general make them isolated and soon the child will lose friends as well or never be able to make enough so

when the child has to face the society or a large audience in the future that will be a great hindrance. **Gonzalez (1993)** had researched on cartoons and child behaviour and extracted a very important information that children also tend to learn from the emotions and expressions of the cartoon figures and any emotion too less or too much for the child is a threat, again here the key is moderation, the child should not be emotionally attached to the characters and the emotions in depth as children in the age of 9 to 10 can easily get attached to the emotions and then it will always create a huge amount of co-relational behaviour in the child, if the animated character is upset in the track of the cartoon, the child will also be and for long hours as well.

So cartoons tend to take a toll on the child's development both physically and mentally and moderation should be the key so that the television viewing can be healthy and entertaining and not strenuous.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

Theory of Aggression: Anderson and Bushman (2002) studied the human aggression with regard to two factors where one is the proximity and distal effect of aggression. Proximity is when the situation directly makes the person aggressive, where the situation is as such that the person behaves violently, in case of cartoons the person views the scene and the comic character or the situation there may immediately make the person violent. Distal tend to contribute to the long term or life-long effect on the behaviour of the person, In the distal the individual may view the violent content continuously for a long period of time and it will have an effect on the child for a lifetime. Thus the aggression model proves that there is a relation between the media violence and the aggression.

Script Theory: When aggression is seen as a reward in media, then it tends to become problematic, the media represents that when there is a problem, the solution of it is solved through violence, the violent behaviour is being rewarded and it then effects the child's behaviour and psyche leading to the child also behaving in the same scripted way, this reward for violence is thus attractive and it effects the child so much that they tend to start putting this kind of approach to real life as well.

General Learning model or Media Violence Theory: Media violence forms the base of the television in the 1950's , it brought about several changes in the popular films and the advent of the video games and the aggression shown here is directly proportionate to how one reflects back to the society. In the working of this theory, Buckley and Anderson (2006) had analysed that people behave a certain way in specific situations and further when the individual tends to view the violent content everyday then they interact with the community in that way, they start communicating and behaving in a way that turns out to be violent.

CONCLUSION:

Today not only television and cartoons but many other platforms also showcase violent content, animated movies, video games all of it, so there are numerous platforms that can make the child aggressive and it is all in our fingertips, but the control should always be in our hands, to educate and inform the child that such violent cartoons or content which is disturbing shouldn't become a part of our lives, and rather one should be able to replace the violent content with the educational content for the effective and positive well-being of the child.

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